



Foster Family Service Newsletter

Great Reports From Holiday Parties

After receiving several reports about the good times had at our area FFS Parties, we decided to share a few with our readers.

Santa Rosa's party was really nice! The kids have been saying all week how much fun it was and it was neat having some of the foster parents joining FFS Social Worker, Erin Atkins, on the ice. Erin reports the highlights for her as: racing around the ice with Trey, Ian, Dakota and Zachary...spinning around in the center with Jayla, James, Azalea and Jaime and watching the older girls teaching three year old Enjoli how to skate. **Thank you to everyone who attended!**

Placerville's office enjoyed their holiday open house as always this year. We had a wonderful visit from Santa and his Elves, who stuck around to sing carols with help from the Hankins family and our many children. **Thank you all for sharing the evening with us**, and a special thanks to the Riffey family for assistance with the décor!

Oroville's party was filled with good food, fun and the Big Event of the Evening: Santa came to visit the children. The children sat around the Christmas tree and sang "Here Comes Santa Claus", Rudolph The Red Nose Reindeer and many other songs. The were very excited to hear a loud knock on the door; with great excitement they answered "Come In Santa"!!!!. All of the children ran to Santa with hugs and tugs on his beard. Santa ho ho ho'd his way to his seat and sat down; each child sat on Santa's

lap and had their picture taken while receiving their gift. It was very exciting to have Santa visit the children at our Annual Christmas Party

So. Lake Tahoe's Christmas Party was a hit! Santa, of course, was the high light and the kids loved all their presents from him. We ate good food and had great company! **Thank you for coming!**

Sacramento's staff decorated the Community Center of Howe Park for the Christmas party on December 9th. The families enjoyed snacks and a visit from Santa Claus. Most of the kids (and some adults!) had their pictures taken with Santa as he gave them their gifts. Everyone had a nice time and appreciated the extra elbow room in the Community Center.



John Johnson, Executive Director of Foster Family Service puts in his request at the Sacramento party... but was he naughty or nice?

January 2007

Wendy Knutson , Editor

*The Delora Corporation
dba
**Foster Family Service
&
Adoptions by
Foster Family Service***

*Executive Director
John Johnson M.S.W., Psy.D*

Board of Directors

Arthur Magaña, Ph.D.

Barbara Hoffman

Bob Bridges

Sue Roberts, MSW

Dave Soper, MA

Steven Shortes

Consultant to the Board

Lee Henderson, MA

In This Issue:

Holiday Parties	1
Attachment part 1	2
Kids	3
New Social Workers	3
New Homes	3
Trainings	4

Attachment: It Takes Two, At Least

(excerpts from *Fostering Families Today*, Nov/Dec 2006) By Joyce Maguire Pavao, Ph.D.



Children do not have attachment “disorders,” they have attachment difficulty because of the chaotic and complicated lives they have lived prior to their current placement. Even children born into a healthy, intact family can have attachment issues. We need to help new parents understand that not only does it take “two to tango,” but it takes time to deconstruct old patterns and reconstruct a new life for the child and family. In addition, it is important that foster and adoptive parents understand their own attachment styles as well as some strategies and models for successful redirecting a child’s problematic behavior.

All humans have to attach. We are, after all, inter-relational beings. So, why is it that we never look at the attachment style of the adults when we are seeking a placement for a child? Why is it that we never do the work to help the parent to attach with the child at placement, and at post-placement visits, rather than waiting years until parents then say, “I was ill prepared for a child with trauma and I never understood this child?” If we are inadequately working with adopting parents in the attachment department, we are far more inadequate in working with the fostering parents to support attachment for the child.

Many children are resilient and they can learn to reattach. We used to think that if children were completely and totally detached from their birth families and birth countries they would be more available — like a clean slate — to attach to their “new” family. We now realize that a sign of good attachment is learning to attach, and trusting that attachments can happen again and again. This is why we try to keep the relationships that are not dangerous for a child, in the child’s life in some way, through contact that is safe and visitations that are clinically appropriate. Once an attachment bond is formed, the child can learn to elicit appropriate attachment behavior from his and her caregiver. Most individuals experience some trauma during their childhood. However, children are learning constantly, and as a result they are often quite resilient following these traumatic events.

When you know what motivates your child’s negative behavior, you will be more likely to change the behavior by teaching the child the appropriate positive behaviors.

Sometimes children’s reactions occur by learned as-

sociations or triggers. It is helpful for parents, or other caregivers, to help the child to identify these triggers. Some of the child’s associations lead to tantrums. Abused children, for example, often suffer feelings of anxiety, shame, embarrassment, anger or pain. These feelings often do not go away, and may be associated with other things. It is important to observe your child for what occurs prior to, and after the problem behavior occurs. **It is also important for the adults to be able to reflect on their own reactions, and what things happen prior to and after their buttons are pushed. The consequences that follow a behavior influence whether or not the behavior is likely to be repeated. It is important to give a child attention for positive behavior, and to sometimes ignore negative behavior when possible and appropriate.**

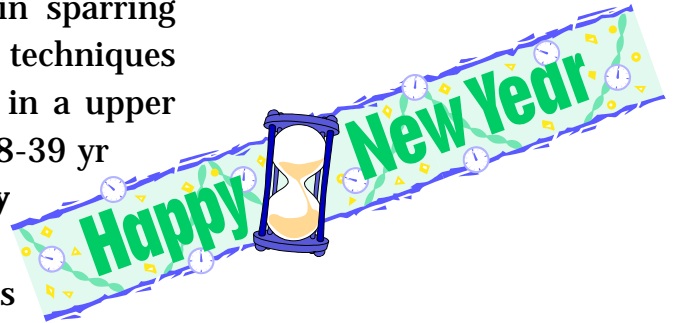
In some foster and adoptive families, the parents are new at this, and are not wanting to discipline too much as a child is settling in. It is usually important to help parents to identify bottom lines for what is “allowed” and to start from the beginning to give the child a sense of safety, by knowing what the rules are in this new environment. **It seems counterintuitive to set boundaries for a child as you are trying to attach, and yet it is this clarity, and these boundaries, that will be evidence of safety to the child.**

If a foster or adoptive parent waits months — and sometimes years — to start setting limits, the child will already have had to develop his or her own way to behave in order to feel safe, and some of these behaviors will not be ones that are liked by the parents. The consequences that children want to achieve when they are behaving poorly are generally reasonable if understood. It is the child’s means of achieving the consequences that are problematic. **When you know what motivates your child’s negative behavior, you will be more likely to change the behavior by teaching the child the appropriate positive behaviors.** This is difficult for parents, who did not parent the child from the beginning, or who are temporary caregivers, but it is not impossible and it is essential to positive attachment and a feeling of safety.

We Are Proud To Say... We Have Great Kids & Great Parents Too!

Good News from **Matt** took 3rd in sparring and takedown techniques (they scored him in an upper division against 18-39 yr olds), **Serenity** took 2nd in take-down techniques (against up to eight year olds, she's only four, competition was tuff)

From the *McArthur CFH*: **Dakota** took 1st in karate for takedown techniques, and 4th for sparring (against up to eight yr olds he's only 6),



Mail Your Good News to:

wendyk@fosterfamilyservice.org

The Welcome Mat Is Out For Our New FFS Team Members

Megan Ciampa is our newest official Social Worker in our South Lake Tahoe office. She comes to us with a great background with foster care as her parents were foster parents while Megan grew up. There are still 20+ stockings that adorn their home at the holidays for each of the children who ever lived in their home. Megan has been great to work with and Leila is more than happy to have a partner to work with. Welcome aboard Megan! We're happy you are here!

Shaun Newmarch comes to our Placerville office after having worked with El Dorado County CPS for a number of years. He knew many of our families through his work at the county, and we are happy to welcome him to our office! He brings some great experience with him. Shaun will also be working in our Sacramento office with their growing caseload. Bonnie and Amy are happy to have the added help to relieve them of some work, and John is happy to have another male in the company!

We would also like to welcome Dorene Fanning to Foster Family Service. Dorene joined the Sacramento staff in mid October and has been a great addition to the team. When Dorene isn't working, she enjoys yoga, watching movies, and spending time with her three daughters, ages 11, 13, and 18.

And welcome to some new homes...

The Acosta Family Home

The Ruckel Family Home

We are always interested in certifying new homes. If you know of anyone who may be interested have them call their local office.

Potential Foster Parents can call one of our offices or find a Pre-Application at our website: www.fosterfamilyservice.org

Foster Family Service Office Numbers:

Sacramento (916) 487-2111

Placerville (530) 621-2110

Lake Tahoe (530) 544-2111

Lodi (209) 334-2111

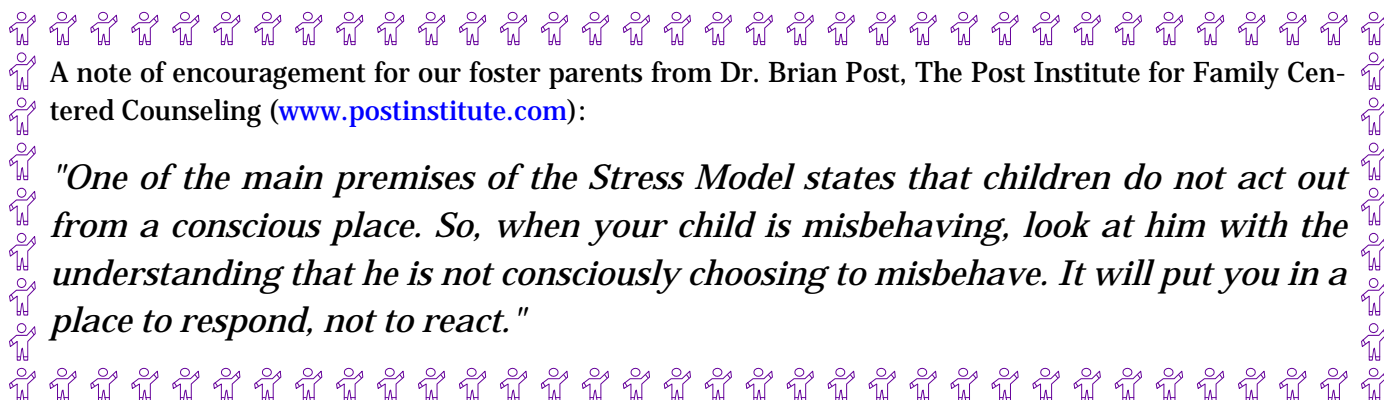
Santa Rosa (707) 528-2115

Oroville (530) 533-1576

Thank You

While John is unable to write his usual agency update this month, however he has phoned in his Best Wishes in the New Year to all of you.

Thank you for the work you do caring for our communities children and families. By opening your home and heart, you play a vital role in helping children and families in crisis heal. Thank you for sharing your family and your home, giving love, encouragement, and hope to children and families in need. And although all the children you've helped don't always tell you, their lives have been changed forever having known and been helped by you.

A note of encouragement for our foster parents from Dr. Brian Post, The Post Institute for Family Centered Counseling (www.postinstitute.com):

"One of the main premises of the Stress Model states that children do not act out from a conscious place. So, when your child is misbehaving, look at him with the understanding that he is not consciously choosing to misbehave. It will put you in a place to respond, not to react."

Training Information

(We do not have an official schedule at the printing of this newsletter.)

Upcoming training topics:

- * Adoptions, State Adoptions Training
- * CCL Regulations and Prudent Parent Laws
- * February Townhall Meetings Start
- * CASA
- * Foster Youth Education Services

